

County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works Snow Removal July 2009

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q - How does the County of San Bernardino prepare for the snow season?

A - Throughout the year, the County of San Bernardino Transportation Department maintenance staffs prepare for snow removal by obtaining special training, checking equipment, performing dry runs on established snowplow routes and updating the listing of private individuals and/or companies with heavy equipment that can be contracted with should they be needed to assist with snow removal.

Q - How many mountain roads does the County plow?

A - In a normal winter season, the County plows over 820 lane miles. As the elevation of the snow fall decreases the number of lane miles significantly increases. Such was the case in December of 2008, when the County plowed roughly 2000 lane miles. The County also coordinates with Special District's, which plows 200 lane miles and Caltrans which plows 240 lane miles.

Q - When do they plow the roads?

A - Crews begin plowing the roads when there is 2 inches or more of snow on the primary roads.

Q - Why isn't my road plowed sooner?

A - Primary roads such as Lake Gregory Road, Grass Valley Road, Live Oak Road, Green Valley Lake Road, Maple Lane and Valley of the Falls are plowed first, followed by secondary roads, which connect the local roads to the primary roads, then lastly the local roads, such as the ones you may live on. This is done in this order to maximize access for emergency vehicles. Also, if there are vehicles parked in the road right-of-way blocking the snowplow routes, the operators have to wait until the vehicles are removed, delaying snow removal operations. Other obstacles can also block the roads such as downed trees and power lines. The amount of snowfall will have different effects on the snow removal process.

Q - Why does it seem to take a long time to get to the local roads?

A - During heavy snow falls the primary roads may get over the 2" threshold stated above before we are able to plow the local roads. The plows must go back to the primary roads first before continuing with the local roads. Also, other obstacles such as vehicles that may be blocking the narrower local roads take time to be removed so the plows can gain access to the roads.

Q - When are cinders put onto the roadways?

A - We put cinders down on primary roads when the roads are experiencing icy conditions. They are also put down in school areas and where the California Highway Patrol advises us to. We do not cinder all County maintained roads.

Q - How do you know that my road has been plowed?

A - Our snow removal equipment operators have maps of the assigned snow removal routes. At the end of their shift they go over their logs with their shift supervisor. We are also working on GPS based systems on our snow removal equipment to provide real time monitoring of their progress.

Q - Why can't the County crews move the vehicles that are in the way of the plows?

A - County crews are not authorized to move the vehicles and, therefore, must contact the California Highway Patrol to have them moved. From the moment the vehicle is 'tagged' to the actual removal may take up to 4 to 6 hours per vehicle. During heavy snow falls towing may not be possible.

Q - What happens when a snow-plow breaks down?

A - The County has a replacement program to keep up with modernization of our fleet with newer equipment. The County also has maintenance staff in the mountain yards to repair the equipment without taking it out of the mountains. If equipment does break down we have stand by equipment and equipment that can be brought in from other areas. Rental equipment can also be requested from contractors in the area.

Q - What roads are the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works responsible for clearing?

A - We are responsible for clearing County maintained roads. Caltrans plows the State Highways while Special Districts plows areas under current contracts with community service areas. The City of Big Bear Lake and private contractors also clear their own roads.

Q - What should I do if an emergency occurs and I don't think the rescue or emergency vehicles can get through on the roads?

A - Call 911 or the local police immediately. They are equipped with special vehicles for traveling over snowy terrain in emergency situations. The Department of Public Works can provide assistance to emergency response agencies.

Q - Why do the snow-plows block my driveway with snow when they clear the roadway?

A - We are sorry that this occasionally happens, but in making as many roads passable to the community as a whole and as quickly as possible, there is no way to avoid it. The County snow plow operators push the snow off the roadway in smooth, continuous

passes from the center of the road to the edge of the right-of-way and the snow ends up on the road shoulders, sometimes blocking driveways.

Snow plows will make two passes on each side of the road, please wait until the second pass before clearing your driveway. To avoid double work, please try to shovel snow from your driveway after a plow has gone by. Shovel the snow to the right of your driveway as you face the road. Please remember as the snow continues to fall and shortly afterwards, the snow plows will continue to make passes down your road to move the newly fallen snow to the edge of the road, and permit two way travel on your road.

Q - Why can't the snow-plow driver pick up the blade or change the angle of the blade when passing my driveway?

A - Since our main goal is to open the primary roads as soon as possible, lifting of blades at each driveway would slow down the snow removal operation significantly and leave snow in the road that may in turn be a hazard.

Q - Why can't the snow berms be left in front of the empty lots and why are the berms so big?

A - We do make efforts to push snow into such areas when possible. But as stated above, our goal is to clear the roads as quickly as possible and the most efficient way to do so is to move the snow from the center of the roadway to the side. Apart from that would slow down the snow removal operations significantly. The size of a berm is determined by the amount of snowfall and accumulation on the roads.

Q - What should I do if I am a senior or disabled and unable to shovel out my driveway?

A - There are local contractors that you can contact who will clear your snow for a fee. You may contact the Senior Assistance Center at 800-510-2020 for a list of contractors. The local Senior Centers sometimes have lists of volunteers who may assist you. You can also contact the local community groups such as the Rotary, Lions Club and Kiwanis. Many local churches can assist with snow removal also. The local mountain newspapers and the Chamber of Commerce have ads for contractors as well. You should plan ahead prior to the snow season starting by having extra medication refills, powdered milk, dry goods etc. See our brochures on the website for additional tips: www.sbcounty.gov/dpw.

Q - A County snow-plow damaged my car or property. What do I do?

A - If your property is damaged during snow removal or cinder spreading operations, it will be in your best interest to obtain as much of the following information as possible:

1. Note the date of the occurrence, time, address and any other information that you can.
2. Get a description of the vehicle (blower, blade or bucket), the color of the vehicle, vehicle number and any emblems or insignias.

3. Take pictures of damage if possible.

After obtaining this information, you should call the Road Yard Supervisor in your area and explain the damage to them. They will usually be able to tell you who plowed the street and direct you to the proper agency, contractor, or person who can help you further on your claim.

If the damage was caused by County equipment, file a "Claim Against the County" form with the Risk Management Division, within six months of the occurrence. A claim form may be obtained by calling the Radio Room at (909) 387-8063. Be sure and include copies of written estimates of damage and photographs, if possible. Mail to Risk Management, 222 West Hospitality Lane, Third Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0016, (909) 386-8631.

Be sure to check with your yard supervisor first before filing a claim against the County.

Listed below are the County Road Yard telephone numbers:

Radio Room Dispatch	(909) 387-8063
Big Bear (Yard 9)	(909) 866-2167
Blue Jay (Yard 8)	(909) 336-7509
Crestline (Yard 7)	(909) 338-2140
Angelus Oaks (Yard 5)	(909) 387-8073
Forest Falls (Yard 5)	(909) 387-8073
Lytle Creek (Yard 3)	(909) 823-8811
Mt. Baldy/Chino (Yard 1)	(909) 823-7514
Running Springs (Yard 4)	(909) 867-3683
Wrightwood (Yard 11)	(760) 949-0335